

November 17 - 23, 2014

Kentucky Waterfowl Ground Counts

This is the first waterfowl ground count of the 2014-15 wintering period. Overall, most of the states wetlands are in relatively good shape. In some regions local agricultural plantings were impacted by the late spring and/or high water and yields may be reduced. However, in many of these areas an excellent stands of wild millets, smartweed, sprangletop, and other preferred natural waterfowl foods should more than offset the low yields for local agricultural crops. Wetland conditions should only improve with additional precipitation.

A major cold front moved through the central the central plains and across the eastern US bringing the first snow and record low temperatures through the Ohio River Valley. Night time temperatures were in the teens with daytime highs barely reaching freezing. The front caused a major redistribution of pintail, gadwall, ring-necked duck and other early migrating waterfowl species. Waterfowl numbers in Louisiana are reported to be 3X the long-term average for the same period in previous years. Gadwall, northern pintail and ring-necked ducks are the most abundant species. Mallards were one of the least abundant. However, increased waterfowl numbers were not uniform across the southern wintering range as Arkansas reported November waterfowl numbers as similar to 2013 and only about 10% above the long-term average. A large number of mallards remain north of Kentucky and are stacked up in the central Missouri River region to the west and the Illinois and Central Mississippi River areas just north of Kentucky in Illinois.

Kentucky duck numbers are generally similar to that observed during the same period in 2013. The Ballard/Boatwright complex report about 20,500 and Doug Travis WMA 2,600 with mallards being by far the most abundant reported. Duck numbers in west-central Kentucky are substantially higher than reported for this period last year. At Sloughs WMA reports 11,500 ducks last week this compares to 3,500 last year. Slough's also logged the largest concentrations of geese with 3,500 white-fronted, 7,000 snow geese but just 70 Canada geese. At Peabody and Yellowbank WMA numbers were slightly lower than reported from these areas in 2013. As you move into central Kentucky the numbers are more sparse compared to the western regions for the state. Overall, duck numbers are running a little above average for the area with Cedar Creek, Bluegrass Army Depot and Green River Lake (on lake) reporting a fair number of ducks for this reporting period.

Kentucky's 2014-15 duck and goose seasons open Thursday, November 27. The duck season will close on Sunday, January 25 (last day permitted for duck hunting by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and the goose season will close the following Saturday, January 31. Good luck to all waterfowl hunters and remember to be safe whenever you are out pursuing the resource this hunting season.

Location	Number	Species Composition	Comments
Ballard WMA	17,430 ducks 500 WFG 100 CG	70% mallard, 25% gadwall, remainder a mix of shoveler, wood duck, black duck and a few divers.	Ground snow/ice covered. Most ducks on Mitchell Lake and Front Slough. Many birds on the move.
Barren River Lake	No Count		Crop production is low due to a dry season this year, natural wetland plants look better, especially smart weed
Birdsville Island	No count		35 ac. late planted corn considered only fair.

Location	Number	Species Composition	Comments
Kentucky/Barkley Lakes	No Count		
Duck Island	No count		Ag crops impacted by deer and Canada goose depredation. Natural moist soil vegetation excellent and will meet resource needs.
Boatwright WMA	2,940 ducks	70% mallard, 15% ring-necked duck, 10% gadwall remainder a mix of dabblers and a few divers.	Ground snow/ice covered. Most ducks on Swan Lake sitting back out of wind.
Doug Travis WMA	2,600 ducks	60% mallards, 25% wood ducks, 10 gadwalls, 5% GW teal.	Area is 65% flooded with 40% currently iced over but now thawing. Most duck holes flooded all wells running.
Clear Creek WMA	No Count		Good water, some good moist soil. Should provide good opening day prospects.
Peabody WMA	287 ducks 6 coots 281 CG	65% gadwall, 35% mallard, remainder wood duck, shoveler, ring-necked duck.	Water low in MSU's, shallow water frozen but should open this weekend with warmer temperatures and rain. stand of natural veg.
Sloughs WMA	11,500 ducks 70 CG geese 3,500 W-F geese 7,000 Snow geese	90% mallard, 10% Gadwall, Wigeon, pintail, Shoveler Green-Winged Teal and Wood Duck.	Not much water other than what we pumped. Ducks and geese have kept pockets of open water during the last couple of cold days. Warmer weather and rain this weekend should open up most of the water on the area.
Yellowbank WMA	325 ducks	Mostly mallards and gadwall. Some wood duck, pintail and shoveler.	Water level at 1/3 capacity on most MSU's due to dry conditions.
Blue Grass Army Depot (all lakes and ponds)	275 ducks	95% mallard, 3% gadwall, , remainder divers.	All water at seasonal levels. Lake Gem MSU about 1/2 full, small ponds iced over.

Location	Number	Species Composition	Comments
Herrington Lake	No Count		
Taylorsville Lake	12 ducks	Unknown divers.	Shallow water embayments froze. Will flood MSU's next week if weather and water permit.
Cedar Cr./Dix R. WMA	130 ducks 1,250 coots 50 snow geese	75% mallard, 20% gadwall, remainder wood duck, green-winged teal and ring-necked duck. Snow geese left area at first light.	Dix River MSU's are dry. Need rain to recharge. Lake levels normal. Good vegetative margins.
Green River WMA	140 ducks	85% mallard, 15% hooded merganser.	All MSU's and beaver ponds have some water. Lake at winter pool.
Cave Run Lake	No Count		